

Bertolet-Herbein Cabin
1-1/2 miles north-northeast of
Limekiln (Oley Line)
Limekiln Vicinity
Berks County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-1047

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

BERTOLET-HERBEIN CABIN

Location: 1-1/2 miles north-northeast of Limekiln (Oley Line),
Limekiln Vicinity, Berks County, Pennsylvania

Present Owner: Eastern Lime Corporation

Present Use: Storage building on the farm of David L. Snyder

Brief Statement
of Significance: This building is one of the few surviving examples
of a simple and picturesque type of home built by
the first settlers in the Pennsylvania-German
country. It is in imminent danger of demolition.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Erected for Elizabeth Bertolet, widow of Peter Bertolet, between 1737 and 1745, on a plot of ground purchased from Jonathan Herbein. June 1745 sold back to Jonathan Herbein with the cabin. 1761 sold by Jonathan Herbein to his son Peter for £200. 1795, on Peter Herbein's death, willed to his son Samuel. 1821, on Samuel Herbein's death, sold by his heirs to Samuel's brother Peter, eldest son of the above-mentioned Peter Herbein. 1828, at Peter Herbein's death, willed to his nephew David Schneider. In the Schneider family, 1866 to Jackson Schneider, then to his widow Annie Snyder (anglicized spelling), and on her death in 1916 to David L. Snyder. 1955 sold by David L. Snyder to Eastern Lime Corporation.

2. Date of erection: Between 1737 and 1745.

- B. Supplemental Material: The following article, edited by the author for this photo-data book, is extracted from The American-German Review, Vol. XXV, No. 3 (February-March 1960), pages 12-14, by James C. Massey.

"... Pronounced Germanic overtones mark this small one-and-a-half story log cabin, and its three-room plan is typical of German building ... [in] Pennsylvania ... Across one end of the house is the kitchen, with entrances at both front and back, and a steep ladder-like stairway to the attic in an outside corner. The larger remainder of the house is divided laterally into two rooms, a sitting room in the front, and behind it, a chamber.

"For maximum warmth the one fireplace is located near the center of the house where the three rooms come together. Built of stone, and

almost eleven feet wide, the hearth opens to the kitchen, and still holds its aged wood crane for cooking. Overhead, a large girder or 'summer beam' runs laterally across the cabin, resting, on the kitchen side, on top of the fireplace lintel at the center of the opening. The attic is one large room with the free standing chimney stack near the center. A projecting pent eave supported by extension of the attic joists and roof rafters shelters the doorways, and may have originally extended along both front and back of the Cabin. Such pent eaves are common in Germanic construction in Pennsylvania and on the small farmhouses of the Rhine Valley in Southwest Germany, in Alsace and Switzerland, the area from which many of these early settlers came.

"The cabin was probably built with small casement windows, similar to those in Fort Zeller at Newmanstown, with the present double hung wood windows being installed after the Revolutionary War. Also similar to the important 1745 Fort Zeller is the two-part 'dutch' front door. The doors and window shutters are of simple vertical board construction with short, and rather crude, wrought iron strap hinges.

"The farm and cabin have been in the Schneider family since 1828 when the 61 acres was willed to young David Schneider by his Uncle Peter Herbein. Although it was Peter's great-grandfather, Jonathan Herbein, who originally received the farm by patent in 1737, the cabin itself, was built by one of the prominent Bertolet family. The histories of these three families is intertwined for many years, their names appearing and reappearing as witnesses to wills, as executors of estates, and by intermarriage.

"Peter Bertolet and his wife Elizabeth were amongst the earliest settlers in the Oley Valley, having received a farm there by patent in 1720. His brother, Jean, was the principal American ancestor of the Bertolet family. Peter died in 1737 with Elizabeth and his son John surviving him. In May 1737, we find Elizabeth selling a 100-acre farm in Oley to her neighbor, Jonathan Herbein, and then, in October buying from him the 250-acre plot on which the cabin was soon to be erected. The Widow Bertolet owned this farm from 1737 to 1745, erecting this small house sometime during these years. Then, in June 1745, she sold the farm back to Jonathan Herbein, and died two years later.

"We can only speculate why the elder Herbein sold the land only two months after he received it by patent, and then bought it back again eight years later; but it was probably through close friendship with the Bertolets.

"It is not certain when Jonathan Herbein settled in America, but his son, Peter, with his first wife Margaret, arrived in Philadelphia on board the ship 'Pink' in October of 1732 and soon afterwards settled in the Oley Valley.

"In 1761, well before his death in 1774 at 80 years of age, Jonathan Herbein sold this farm to his son Peter for £200. Later, at Peter's death in 1795, 150 acres was willed to his eldest son Peter, with another son Samuel receiving a 'messuage and tract of land in Oley' of 60 acres. By this will, Peter received his father's own house--which by that time had replaced the original cabin as the family home, and the younger Samuel received the then old and primitive cabin.

"In 1821, when Samuel died childless and without a will, his eleven heirs sold his farm to his brother Peter. When Peter died in 1828, he willed his land to two nephews, Peter and David Schneider, the children of his sister Ester, wife of Benjamin Schneider. Peter received Peter Herbein's own house with a 200-acre farm for £2000. David received 60 acres with the 'messuage or tenement' for £500--the same cabin and farm Peter Herbein bought from his brother Samuel's estate in 1821.

"Along with the modest cabin, David inherited the fine large stone barn Peter Herbein had built in 1823. Still standing, it is an especially fine example of The Pennsylvania German Barn, and attests to its age with a round datestone, ' P H 1823 ', in the gable.

"Soon afterwards, David and his wife, Maria, built the attractive stone house still standing adjacent to the old cabin. It is marked by a date stone with the year '1831' and their names. The farm continued in the Schneider family for many years, passing to Jackson Schneider in 1866, then to Jackson's widow, Annie Snyder (the spelling by now anglicized), and on her death in 1916, to her son, David Snyder. Although David sold the farm to the Eastern Lime Corporation in 1955, he still [1959] operates it under lease."

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Very early log cabin built on a usual plan--two rooms with a large free-standing fireplace in stone, in the center.
2. Condition of fabric: Very good; some logs rotting at ground.

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: One-and-a-half stories, rectangular plan, approximately 20 feet by 30 feet.
2. Foundations: Rubble, light gray local stone.
3. Wall construction: Log, chinked with mortar.

4. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: Two Dutch half doors, at opposite sides of the cabin; crude frames and hardware; three-foot by six-foot stoops at both doors.
- b. Windows and shutters: Three double-hung windows with broad shutters on original strap hinges. Window frames are post-Revolutionary; six-over-six light windows.

5. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Steep gable roof flares at lower third of height--tin covered. Roof construction hand-hewn: no ridge pole, rafters notched into extra large sill set on top of wall. Rafters tied half way up with large wooden pegs.
- b. Eaves: Overhanging eaves.

6. Chimney: Large stone chimney, slightly off-center of the house.

C. Technical Description of Interiors:

1. Floor plans: Rectangular plan; two rooms separated by free-standing fireplace; stairs in corner. Partial cellar.
2. Stairway: Simple ladder-like corner stairway without railing--three steps, landing, straight run.
3. Flooring: Brick and board floors; wide boards over cement on boards.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Log and plaster interior finish. Summer beam exposed runs from wall to fireplace and rests on 12-inch by 14-inch chimney beam.
5. Doorways and doors: Two vertical beaded board doors with strap hinges.
6. Trim: Some late eighteenth-century trim to windows. Boards are beaded.
7. Hardware: Very old door hardware--tulip shape hinges and locks. Chains on wooden crane in fireplace.
8. Lighting: Electric.
9. Heating: Large stone kitchen fireplace, four feet by ten feet, with original wood crane.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Farm adjacent to main house. Cabin faces southeast.
2. Outbuildings: Adjacent stone farmhouse built in 1831 by David Schneider. Stone barn built in 1823 by Peter Herbein.
3. Landscaping: Grass, grape arbor, trees.

Prepared by James C. Massey, Architect
National Park Service
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